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ABSTRACT

Using the notion of interlanguage, this paper illustrates how a useful characterization may be obtained of some aspects of the English of Shona speakers. The interference hypothesis in language learning is denoted, while the interlanguage hypothesis in which interference plays a part, is promoted. Application of the interlanguage concept illustrates that Shona-English has developed a standard form. Five interlanguage processes that are discussed and exemplified are: (1) language transfer as illustrated through stress, rhythm, and phoneme transfer; (2) transfer of training in which deviances arise as a result of identifiable items in training procedures; (3) strategies of learning that involve the ways in which a learner approaches the unknown material; (4) strategies of communication that mark the approach a learner adopts to communicate with native speakers of a target language; and (5) overgeneralization of target language linguistic material. The data serve to acknowledge the existence of the Shona variety of English and the fact that it is a satisfactory means of communication for all circumstances. Its distinctiveness arises from distinctive pronunciation and idioms, while the grammar is not distinguishable from that of other varieties. (Author/JK)

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THE ENGLISH OF SHONA SPEAKERS: AN APPLICATION OF THE INTERLANGUAGE CONCEPT.

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A paper given at the Linguistics in Central and Southern Africa Conference, Salisbury, Rhodesia.

December 10, 1975.

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THE ENGLISH OF SHONA SPEAKERS : AN APPLICATION OF THE INTERLANGUAGE CONCEPT

The purpose of this paper is twofold: firstly, I would like to bring to the attention of delegates the concept of 'interlanguage' (also known as 'interlingua' or 'approximative language system') as a useful tool of analysis in a bilingual or multilingual community and make certain comments on it from the theoretical point of view. Secondly, I would like to apply the concept to aspects of English, as spoken by first language speakers of Shona in Rhodesia. By outlining the concept first and then relating it to the English of Shona speakers, I hope to indicate a route which investigators might follow to attain the following ends:

1. Insightful linguistic information, useful in its own right.
2. Sociolinguistic information which might aid in language planning at a national level.

DEFINITION

The notion of interlanguage (IL) was first defined by Larry Selinker in 1969. In a later article, in 1972, he makes the following observation (p. 35): " ... in the making of constructs relevant to a theory of second language learning, one would be completely justified in hypothesising, perhaps even compelled to hypothesise the existence of a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from a learner's attempted production of a TL [target language] norm. This linguistic system we will call 'interlanguage'."

Three assumptions are made regarding an IL (adapted from Nemser, 1971, p.55):

1. At any given time the speech of a language learner is the patterned product of the IL, which is a linguistic system distinct from both the source language and the target language.

2. The IL, at any one time, is part of a developing series which starts at the learner's first attempt to use the target language and finishes with 'merger' or perfect proficiency. The latter is, of course, rare for post-adolescent learners.

3. In any particular learning situation the ILs are nearly the same for learners who have been exposed to the same amount of learning experience and who are similar in ability.

The consequence of these assumptions is that a new, important status is given to the utterances of learners and this is a major step forward in providing a sound basis for language pedagogy. Whereas, previously, all the language produced by a learner was regarded as somehow wrong, because deviant from the perfect proficiency of the native speaker, the new status now ascribed to ILs makes us see them in a new light. Specifically, they must now be regarded as coherent systems and therefore the labels 'error' and 'mistake' cannot be applied to deviations from the system of the target language. The IL has its own coherence and logic and what may seem an error from the target language perspective may in fact be entirely consistent within the system of the IL. Here the 'system of the target language' does not imply solely phonological and grammatical rules. It includes the wider context of

utterance - the wider, apparently real world in which we live and have our being, a world with which the linguistic system interlocks and from which it derives its own purpose and meaning. It is precisely because of the systematic nature of ILs that the Appendix has the heading "deviances and/or errors". 'Deviances' are not 'wrong' within the IL system, whereas 'errors' are wrong in any system. It is the pressure of common usage which determines correctness or lack of it.

Using the notion of IL outlined so far, I would like to show how a useful characterisation of some aspects of the English of Shona speakers may be obtained. (From this point on, I will refer to the ILs of Shona speakers learning English as Shona-English). I will try to show, by using this approach, that currently held views of the overriding importance of language transfer, also known as interference, must be modified. Indeed, one of the theoretical points of this paper may be seen as an attempt to denote the interference hypothesis in language learning and promote the IL hypothesis, in which interference plays a part but is not central. A second point, to be dealt with later, is that the IL concept leads one to conclude that Shona-English has now developed a standard form which must be accepted as such.

According to one model, language transfer is only one in a set of five IL processes. This is the model outlined by Selinker (1972, pp 37-41), which will now be used as a framework in which Shona-English may be characterised. Limitation of time in giving this paper necessarily means that only a few examples can be given for each process. However, I hope to show that the procedure is open-ended and could therefore be carried much further in a lengthier exposition. Examples from the Appendix will be referred to in order to support some of the generalisations made in the

following sections. Three points should be noted regarding the examples in the Appendix:

1. They are attested.
2. They are from a restricted register: essays written by first-year university students.
3. Some of them are errors, others are deviances. A full classification of them into one or other category would depend upon which stage of the IL, earlier or later, was under discussion. A decision in each case would have to be based upon observation of the utterances of a large number of learners, although no absolutely objective criterion is possible. The subjective judgement of highly experienced teachers of English to Shona speakers would be the deciding factor in many cases.

PROCESS 1

LANGUAGE TRANSFER

The concept of language transfer is, of course, very familiar to all teachers of second or foreign languages. Its real and important existence is at present the most telling argument of those who rightly claim that second language teaching is a quite different process from first language teaching. In Shona-English the following examples may be given and it will be seen that interference or transfer phenomena can vary from the obvious to the very subtle.

Examples:

One of the more obvious forms of transfer is that related to stress and rhythm. The Shona speaker will transfer the syllable-timed characteristic of Shona to English, which is stress-timed. And the Shona speaker also tends to interpret English stresses as high tones.

Other differences in the phonological systems also result in transfer, as in the obvious case of the five-vowel Shona system as against the 20-vowel (by one analysis) English system.

A more subtle transfer problem arises with certain consonant sounds in which allophonic distribution is important and not always obvious, e.g. English /l/. The lateral continuant /l/ does not exist in most Shona dialects and beginners tend to replace the clear /l/ with a trilled /r/, which is part of the Shona consonant system. As the learner proceeds to the next stage of Shona-English IL, the clear /l/ is perceived, but not the dark /ɫ/ which always remains difficult to perceive. The tendency is to leave out the dark / ɫ / and lengthen the adjacent vowel sound. When the dark /ɫ/ is perceived it is replaced in production by a clear allophone of /l/. For example, the name Lionel may start off in an early IL as /raino/. As ILs progressively follow each other its pronunciation may move to /laino/, then to /lainol/, then to /laino ɫ/ and, possibly, to merger, / laiə n ə ɫ/.

The effects of language transfer are numerous and varied and are best revealed by contrastive analysis of the language systems. There are several examples of distinctive IL features caused by phonological interference in the Appendix, e.g. nos. 3, 15, 24 and 25.

PROCESS 2

TRANSFER OF TRAINING is a process in the IL model in which deviances arise as a result of 'identifiable items in training procedures' (Selinker, 1972, p. 37). That is to say, if the presentation of certain linguistic points is regularly, though unintentionally, deviant, then the resultant learned items are due to a type of transfer of training. For example, textbooks may present points of usage incorrectly or inadequately, but more often the teacher is the source of material for transfer of training. Unwittingly he will perpetuate standard deviances.

Examples:

'Sorry' used in Shona-English in a context in which the speaker is in no way responsible for the event which has induced a sympathetic remark.

'Thank you' or 'please' is frequently used in a particular Shona-English manner. I have often heard 'thank you' used in situations which do not include an element of gratitude, but only respect. And 'please' seems to have become a catch-all term expressing courtesy, in the earlier Shona-English ILs, e.g. "Is Mr. Mpofu here today?"/ "He is not here, please."

In no. 53 in the Appendix, "There is no causal effect", we have an example of the result of verbal presentation without visual reinforcement of the phrase "cause and effect", which is perceived as "causal effect". Again, this is an identifiable item in training procedure.

PROCESS 3

STRATEGIES OF LEARNING

These involve the ways in which a learner approaches the

unknown material. They are frequently culture-bound and include any devices which the learner may use to master the target language, as in studying from written language and pronouncing words on the basis of false assumptions about the relationship between spelling and pronunciation.

e.g. Shona-English IL at one stage (an early one) produces /ɛd/ on the end of words such as looked /lukɛd/ and rubbed /rʌbɛd/

Another strategy may be to learn phrases as whole units and combine them oddly, resulting in the stilted form of Shona-English typically exemplified in:

"Ever since the eighteenth century began" (32 in Appendix). This mixes the units "ever since (something) began", implying that it now continues and "since (something) began", implying a single point in time.

Again, chorus-learning as a group learning strategy, may result in a sing-song intonation pattern in early Shona-English.

Yet another example of learning strategy is the almost instinctive simplification of the target language that learners indulge in, e.g. The early Shona-English speaker will ignore the -s ending of the 3rd person singular, as in "He come to town". This strategy of simplification may be one of learning or may belong to the next process to be dealt with, strategy of communication, depending upon the circumstances of utterance. The exigencies of an immediate need to communicate may necessitate a simplification of grammar, for example, and this motivation behind the simplification process would put it in a different category to simplification intended to make learning easier.

PROCESS 4

STRATEGIES OF COMMUNICATION are those in which there is an 'identifiable approach by the learner to communication with native speakers of the target language.' (Selinker, 1972, p. 37) This approach may arise when the learner feels impelled to communicate somehow, whilst knowing that his IL is at an early stage. The result is that many forms may be simplified, as mentioned in regard to Process 3, or uttered in a way which the learner himself realises is probably deviant, but which he has not yet progressed beyond. Examples are similar to those in Process 3.

PROCESS 5

OVER-GENERALISATION OF TARGET LANGUAGE LINGUISTIC MATERIAL is, like language transfer, very familiar to language teachers. It occurs when the patterns and semantic features of the target language are obviously over-generalised. Well-known examples of Shona-English are:

"cope up with" in which "keep up" is over-generalised (69 in Appendix)

'make to do something', e.g. "Make John to speak", for "Make John speak", in which "force to" or "compel to" is over-generalised (63 in Appendix).

Other examples from the Appendix are: numbers

22, "allow to" is over-generalised.

43, "look for" is over-generalised, and

90, "lay emphasis on" is over-generalised

From these examples of Selinker's five IL processes one may (tentatively perhaps) draw the conclusion that interference from

the first language is not necessarily the central factor in causing errors or deviances from the target language norm. Furthermore, if one sets up suitable categories, it is not only possible to classify errors or deviances, but also to provide a reasonably clear picture of the characteristic features of Shona-English. For, like any other variety of English, its distinctiveness depends upon the consistent ways in which it differs from other varieties. With this in mind, we may now briefly consider Shona-English as a local variety.

SHONA-ENGLISH AS A LOCAL VARIETY

The interlanguage of learners of English all over the world results from many different types of contact situation and the possible range of contexts is reflected in the following list:

> English as a foreign language, English as a second language, English of immigrant communities, pidgin or creole English and indigenous minority dialects of English.

There is no need here to define these contexts, which are mentioned simply to emphasise that Shona-English has resulted from a very specific contact situation, a second language one, with its own peculiarities.

In many second language situations, English has developed 'local varieties', e.g. in India and West Africa. In these situations, the development of the ILs seems to reach a stage which is at some distance from total merger and which becomes a standard variety. I would like to suggest here that Shona-English has reached just such a point: there now exists a standard variety of English, an IL of the native-speaker of Shona learning

English, which might be referred to as standard or educated Shona-English. This variety is the natural goal of those who aspire to learn English well enough for all uses in Rhodesia. Its adequacy for international intelligibility within the English speaking world is perhaps more debatable. I use the term 'natural goal' deliberately, for there are certain social constraints which make standard Shona-English an identifiable and natural goal.

Reasons for positing a standard variety of Shona-English

1. In any second language situation, there is always a continuum of ILs from the level of basic transactional English for commercial purposes to the educated or 'intellectual' level. Shona-English fits this pattern very clearly.

2. The upper level of the IL is normally used for social control through government administration. In Rhodesia this is clearly not the case, since governmental operations (e.g. Parliamentary debate) are conducted largely by native speakers of English. This is clearly a situation created by the social and political structure peculiar to this country and I would venture the observation that beneath the veneer of mother tongue English, in social administration, there is a reasonably well standardised variety of Shona-English. In due course this variety will no doubt become the norm for second language speakers of English, although at present the norm, and consequently the goal, of E.S.L. pedagogy is

assumed to be one (or any) of the varieties of native speaker English (e.g. R.P., Scots English or Irish English).

3. Richards (1972, p. 72) observes: "all language learning .... proceeds in terms of approximative systems [ILs], but under certain conditions in second language learning this interlingual stage may become the end point in the learning process, taking on a new role in in-group communication and hence in ethnic identity and solidarity." It is the latter remark which I feel comes to the heart of the matter. A reluctance to proceed beyond a certain stage in IL development is evident in many students I have dealt with at the University of Rhodesia. Any attempt to approach merger of IL and native speaker English of any variety, is regarded by the learner as pretentious, affected and artificial. Group control of behaviour is too strong to be overcome. It may perhaps be argued that this is due solely to current political problems, but parallel situations in other areas of the world suggest strongly that there has arisen a standard variety, with its own power to control local English language behaviour.

It seems, then, that the time has come to acknowledge the existence of this variety of English and the fact that it is a satisfactory means of communication for all circumstances. Like many other varieties of English, its distinctiveness arises

largely from distinctive pronunciation and idioms, whilst the grammar is not distinguishable from that of other varieties.

REFERENCES

The articles mentioned or quoted may all be found in Error Analysis : Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition, ed. Jack C. Richards, Longman, 1974, to which all page numbers in this paper refer.

The articles are :

1. "Interlanguage", L. Selinker, IRAL X/3, 1972, pp 219 - 231.
2. "Approximative Systems of Foreign Language Learners", W. Nemser, IRAL IX/2, 1971, pp 115 - 123.
3. "Social Factors, Interlanguage and Language Learning", J.C. Richards, Language Learning XXII/2, 1972, pp 159 - 1[illegible].

INTERLANGUAGE

SHONA-ENGLISH DEVIANCES AND/OR ERRORS

1. He would sure have started to criticise the poem (certainly).
2. How far true this is (how far this is true).
3. fucultative aerobes (facultative)
4. He can be described to be going through a phase (as going).
5. Pulls people to conform with the laid standards (makes ... conform / standards laid down).
6. The poem contains an advice to lovers (an)
7. Querry was far much better than Rycker (far better).
8. One best example of this is (the best).
9. He was devoted in his work that he was prepared to see disease in retreat (so devoted).
10. This is very costly; so much that I cannot afford it (so much so).
11. The primarily cause and the actually cause (primary ... actual).
12. Borrowings still flourished since the Renaissance and earlier days (still; since; Renaissance days).
13. I was crashed by a car (crushed/into?).
14. To have a productive life (lead).
15. My dream came out to be true (turned out).
16. I had large dreams that I was frightened (such/large?)
17. Appearance of coloured pigments enabled us to deduce the cause (the appearance).
18. To a certain extend (extent).
19. The flask has a tendence to slip (tendency).
20. Countries as Italy and Spain (such as)
21. He went to German (Germany).
22. The author lets Thomas to be hung upside down (be hung)
23. The same behaviour on a child (as/towards).
24. dorminate (dominate).
25. allience (alliance).
26. There was no need for reprimanding the headman (to reprimand).
27. He stirs up the confidence of the child (arouses).
28. All this boils to one important point (down).

29. / ...

29. Outcusts (outcastes).

30. The commodities are equal by value (in).

31. The price levels vary such that the market is unstable (in such a way that).

32. Ever since the eighteenth century began (since the beginning of).

33. He served the people from trouble (saved).

34. The rate of interest are high (is).

35. mashrooming population growth (mushrooming).

36. investiment (investment).

37. defination (definition).

38. If ever once the T.T.Ls were fertile (were ever).

39. Unless if there is demand for his removal (unless there is).

40. Bacteria, although they have a similar basic structure, they are quite diverse (are).

41. shunned from society (by/expelled?)

42. He ensured Josephus that ... (assured).

43. He did not come for work that morning (to).

44. afraid to be laughed at (of being).

46. The impression I got about this place (of)

47. There is no note-taking as we did at school (had).

48. Some students keep long, unkempt hair (have).

49. There is far much more beer on campus than at school (much).

50. It cannot be exactly as what real life is like (what/the same as?)

51. They should be no change in them (there).

52. They are all sorts of discoveries (there).

53. There is no causal effect (cause and)

54. He is so presentable that naturally Munjayi falls in love with him (handsome).

55. I rather regard it as a novel than a story (rather than).

56. Classical theorists specify the number to five or six (as/fix at?)

57. The answer can be circumstantial (will depend on circumstances).

58. This event must also be resulting from (result).

59. Judicial review is making the U.S.A. democratic (makes).

60. Thirdly, I shall lash out the categorical statement (make a/ strike/ omit?).

61. But however when it is fully developed (but).

62. The standard of living is going low (falling).

63. / ...

63. It makes the individual pupil to feel inadequate (makes feel).

64. Psychology must entangle it out (disentangle it).

65. in the Medieval times (in Medieval).

66. bacteria may be having nucleic acid (may have).

67. By far the gram staining procedure is acceptable (far more acceptable).

68. They could cope anything (cope with).

69. We coped up with it (cope with).

70. There was no one from my place here (home area).

71. They were friendly, so much that I was not disillusioned (so)

72. The map gives a strong impact to the eye (makes ... on)

73. Egyptian magicians would do miracles as God (the same).

74. One can go to meals when one requires (wishes).

75. I suggest to see you (would like?)

76. at their spare time (in).

77. The Centre Party has a sprinkled following (scattered/slight?).

78. I will make outstanding reference to the U.S.A. (special).

79. Another form of social control is the economic pressure (is economic).

80. She is lazy to look after her children (too).

81. British treatment of the problem had measured too short (fallen short).

82. He demanded for power (demanded power).

83. He demanded Jesus to come (that .. should).

84. It is significant to notice that (significant that).

85. This keeps the reader in suspension (suspense).

86. Inspite all his virtues (in spite of).

87. She wiped her hands of the problem (washed).

88. The most popular method for showing differences on maps (of).

89. It will be endeavoured to show how significant each is (It will be shown/I will endeavour).

90. Jesus emphasised more on purity (laid more emphasis on).

91. He contrasted the speaker (contradicted).

92. The last stanza is the punch of the poem (climax).

93. There was a disproportionation of occurrences (disproportionate number).

94. /...

94. They divorced their spulses (spouses).

95. People can't strip off the monarchy (strip..of its power)

96. He escaped by a hair's breath (breadth).

97. Similtaneous (..ul..)

98.. The author emphasised his jealous (jealousy).

99. Encomplished (accomplished/encompassed)

100. Seclusiveness (seclusion/exclusiveness)

101. Disintergration (..eg..)

102. They crossed the boarder by night (border).

103. It is very nearer to the experimental figure (near).

104. He was of the same opinion which was expressed by Henning (as).

105. Cohesion is maintained by the course of discourse (? flow of)

106. There Japan gained further rights previously obtained by Germany in Shantung (rights in Shantung previously ...)

107. They were honoured exactly in the same way (... in exactly the ...)

108. They chucked out Matab's eyes (gouged).

109. If at all they really occurred it was in December (occurred at all it ...)

110. It offered challenges to intellectually new immigrants who wanted to find excitement (intellectual challenges).